



Delaware Early Childhood Council

FINAL - Meeting Minutes
July 31, 2019, 10:00 A.M. – 12:00 P.M.
Collette Education Research Building
35 Commerce Way
Dover, DE 19904

The mission of the DECC is to promote the development of a comprehensive and coordinated early childhood system, birth to eight, which provides the highest quality services and environment for Delaware's children and their families.

DECC Voting Member Attendance: Madeleine Bayard, Rodel Foundation of Delaware; Cheryl Clendaniel, TLC, Inc.; Michelle Wall, Appoquinimink School District; Julie Johnson, Tender Loving Kare Child Care Centers; Leslie Newman, Children & Families First; Gabriela Kejner, Department of Health & Social Services; Dr. Kimberly Krzanowski, Office of Early Learning; Dr. Dusty Blakey, Colonial School District; Elizabeth Ritchie, Delaware Technical Community College; Tanisha Merced, Delaware Dept. of Insurance; Dr. Michelle Shaivitz, DE Association for the Education of Young Children; Debra Taylor, Office of Early Learning; Heidi Beck, De Head Start Association; Meredith Seitz, Department of Children, Youth and Their Families

Ex-Officio Council Member Attendance:

Mary Moor, Division of Public Health and Behavioral Health Services; Betty Gail Timm, Office of Child Care Licensing; Clara Martinez, Telamon Corporation; Dr. Martha Buell; University of Delaware; Dr. Kim Brancato, Appoquinimink Preschools

Additional Attendees: Molly Magarik, DHSS; Mary Hirschbiel, Read Aloud DE; Lucinda Ross, St. Michael's; Ray Fitzgerald, DHSS/DSS; Mary Maillis, Department of Education; Kristina Woznicki, YMCA; Jackie Anderson, UMOH; Paulina Gyan, Division of Public Health; Kristy Sheffler, DIEEC; Karen Pierce, Wilmington Head Start; Jordan Frederick, KinderCare; Tracey Wertz, Office of the Early Learning; Christina Koutsourades, Office of Early Learning; Myrna Holmes, DE Association for the Education of Young Children; Rita Hovermale, Department of Education; Monique Martin, Department of Education; Lisa Miller, Delaware Association for the Education of Young Children; Lisa Henry, Division of Public Health; Stephanie Wagner, PolyTech; Tammy Petrowicz, Head Start; Corinne Dries, Newark Day Nursery; Julie Beebe, EHS; Kasia Lundy, EY Parthenon; Rex Varner, OEL Consultant; Diana Morello-DeSerio, University of Delaware; Linda Zankowsky, University of Delaware; Sue Taylor, Children & Families First; Andrea Prettyman, DE Stars; Zashonna Gillis, Telamon Head Start; Michelle Anderson, Children & Families First; Christy Gleason, Sen. Chris Coons Office; Cindy Gibbs, Wilmington Head Start; Toni Dickerson, Sussex Preschools; Daphne Evans, DYE Consult & Training; Dawn Alexander, Colonial School District; Diane Frentzel, Delaware Readiness Teams; Jeannette Short, Office of Early Learning; Kelly Sherretz, University of

Delaware; Jane Bowen, Newark Day Nursery; Tina Shockley, Office of Early Learning; Christina Koutsourades; John Fisher-Klein, Office of Early Learning; Jamie Walko, Office of Early Learning Contractor; Michelle Blankenship, Easter Seals; Candice Brown, Let's Play; Patricia Belle-Scruggs, Boys and Girls Club of Delaware; Cindy Brown, Office of Early Learning; Aisha Ferrell Office of Early Learning; Jamar Cagle, Dept. of Labor; Michelle Spencer, DE Association for the Education of Young Children; Veronica Commodore, DIEEC; Tineal De la Cruz, Office of Early Learning; Mary Akins, Telamon Corporation; Mary Nash Wilson, Office of Management and Budget; Kiley Heron, Tender Loving Kare; A. Wolff, LLM; Malavika Dhawan, EY Parthenon; Vinay Skivakumar, EY Parthenon

Welcome/Call to Order/Approve Minutes

Madeleine Bayard, DECC Chairperson, called the meeting to order at 10:05 a.m. and welcomed everyone. The [minutes of the May 8, 2019](#) meeting were approved by Cheryl Clendaniel and Julie Johnson and passed unanimously. Subcommittee updates were sent out prior to the meeting.

Secretary of Education Dr. Susan S. Bunting provided welcoming remarks regarding the importance of early education in a child's development. Early education was the focus of a few successful bills this past legislative season. She noted that the Governor sees the importance of early learning as there is an additional \$6 million designated for tiered reimbursed. Also, legislation (SB 187) was passed to move the Office of Child Care Licensing (OCCL) to the Department of Education (DOE) by July 1, 2020. She also noted that the Preschool Development Grant (PDG B-5) is in the public outreach phase and participation is encouraged by all.

Next, Jon Sheehan of Governor Carney's Office continued the conversation by noting that POC and Delaware Stars received a total of \$10.5 million in this year's budget, and there was a \$850,000 investment in statewide literacy.

Additionally, the Governor's Office continues to work on governance to streamline 11 divisions in three state agencies. There is the potential to consolidate other work streams to improve services to young children including Part C, Development Watch, etc. Changes to governance, mostly behind the scenes, will be occurring over the coming year. Jon thanked several attendees for their work on these initiatives.

Looking ahead to our next DECC meeting, there will be an update on the governance work with Rolf Grafwallner, a consultant who facilitated similar work in Maryland.

Molly Magarik of DHSS clarified that ultimately they would like to move parts of the POC program to the Department of Education. Next, Dr. Kim Krzanowski noted that \$6.7 million was secured to sustain tiered reimbursement rates which providers will begin to see in September. She noted the handout that shows the rate increase between 2018 and 2019.

Molly Magarik also noted that there was \$1.5 million for DHSS to upgrade the POC computer system, which will allow for future market rate increases to be implemented more efficiently.

Another section of epilogue language will allow DHSS to look at provider rates across the board. DHSS will need to define "a provider" and what they do and what they will be paid, etc. This will bring more attention to all providers. DHSS will work with a consultant who has done this work before.

Questions were asked of DHSS regarding how they will work to assist providers. It was explained that DHSS plans to ask (legislatively) for increases based on FY 2018 enrollment, eligibility, etc. Budget conversations are difficult as each agency needs different funding, and we must work to balance it the best we can.

The next portion of the meeting focused on an Early Childhood Workforce Panel Discussion where the Chair introduced the topic and introduced Julie Johnson, TLK Child Care; Lucinda Ross, St. Michael's and Clara Martinez, Telamon. These individuals gave their views on the early childhood workforce experience from the owner's perspective. Issues that arose were pay, turnover, education, trauma, and language barriers. All experiences were shared in an effort to learn from each other and identify ways to improve and inform our strategic plan.

Julie Johnson, Chair, Early Childhood Workforce Programs and owner of Tender Loving Kare child care centers. She noted that challenges she sees facing the industry are pay, turnover, and retention. She noted that we don't have a workforce, as potential employees are either not qualified, or they don't show up or stay. She noted they do track why employees leave, and it is mostly due to employment in school districts or leaving the field completely. She will continue to work on initiatives to try to address these issues, but it is a process that is time consuming. She suggests the need to work on collaborative relationships, build a workforce and better compensation.

Next, **Lucinda Ross of St. Michael's** noted that she agreed with everything Julie said and added that we should have seen this coming and worked harder to increase pay, benefits and respect for the field. She is worried about having future employees in this field and the ability to pay them a livable wage. She believes workers do not get the respect and encouragement that is needed and that staff retention is definitely an issue.

Finally, **Clara Martinez, Telamon Head Start Corporation,** noted that she too had similar concerns as the others, but she noted that Head Start child care directors must meet specific Head Start regulations regarding employees. For example, 50% of teachers must have a bachelor's degree, which is difficult to find. She too cited that employees gain work experience through Head Start but ultimately go to work in school districts for the better pay. She noted that in Sussex County they must hire home visitors with CDA or degrees which can be difficult to find, and that they also must be able to speak Spanish due to the language barrier. She noted that Head Start requires a lot of paperwork, so they may choose to go work at a private center where they don't have to do the paperwork.

Next, the Chair cited some interesting statistics about the early learning workforce, such as

- 1/3 to half of workforce is on state assistance themselves
- The workforce typically makes \$9-\$10/hr.
- Most of the workforce only has a high school degree
- Early learning gets only a quarter to a tenth of what school districts receive in funding per child

The Chair drew attention to the Early Childhood Workforce Initiatives Underway [Matrix](#) detailing work underway across early learning organizations and moderated the panel, which consisted of five

members. Each member introduced themselves, identified promising work underway and noted the greatest needs to be addressed in the coming year. The following was discussed by the panel:

Ray Fitzgerald, Division Director, Division of Social Services, Department of Health and Social Services

- **POC Program** noted that they are working to address issues with early learning employment through initiatives such as subsidized employment and summer employment programs through Department of Labor. While there are issues with hiring young people, it is a start. These programs are for income-eligible individuals. DHSS would pay their salary for up to a year, and pay for their trainings and/or certifications. After the first year, they could turn into a full time employee.

There are other programs for existing employees to continue their education through DEAEYC. DHSS could potentially subsidize their wage, but then they would have to commit to stay at the childcare program for potentially one year.

Once we have some of these piloted programs underway, we could go to legislators/funders and show short term success in hopes of securing longer term funding.

Anyone interested in participating in this initiative should give Ray Fitzgerald a call to discuss.

Cerron Cade, Secretary, Delaware Department of Labor noted he believes we will not be able to program our way out of this issue. While he is excited about greater opportunities, training programs and subsidized wages, his office has seen this issue in different industries. New training programs will not mandate that a center increase their pay to the training requirements. However attention to this issue is good as it highlights the need for the discussion to be had regarding wages becoming equal with training and experience. He believes we are going to have to allocate more state tax dollars to this issue. He noted that Department of Labor will work with this industry to create short-term and long-term solutions. He also noted we have to invest in both early child educators, through both training and retention. It's not solely a recruitment issue. It is also about how to we keep the people we have.

Dr. Kim Krzanowski said she was encouraged to hear Cabinet Secretaries and others talking about their commitment and recognition of early learning. We have to be innovative, creative and start to do things differently. We are getting the attention of people at every level (she noted that there was a representative from Sen. Coons Office present), so that is encouraging. She is excited about getting serious about tax dollars and revenue streams, even if that means we have to think outside the box as we address this messy, systems-oriented work.

Next, **Rita Hovermale, Education Associate, DOE CTE, Teacher Academy (K-12 Teacher Academy and Early Childhood Teacher Academy)** spoke about the work she is doing with high school students who are interested in entering the early childhood education field. Specifically she mentioned the salary issue. She noted that she encourages the next generation, who are vocal, to be involved in these conversation about training and pay. [A list of schools](#) involved with the Early Childhood Teacher Academy will be sent out after the meeting.

Julie Johnson noted three areas where her Workforce Program subcommittee is focusing their efforts including:

- How to better collaborate with HS pathway programs. One way we are doing this is the Early Childhood Expo, tentatively set for April 21, 2020 in Dover. This would be an opportunity for students to come to this event (in Dover) to obtain network, college options, get professional development and connect with potential employers across the state. We think this will bolster the enthusiasm in the field. Also anyone who wishes to help fund this, please contact Julie Johnson. She would like to partner with others on this expo.
- The committee is also working with higher education programs to look at their curriculum so that the students who graduate from those programs are well-prepared and equipped to work in the field, and
- Lastly, ongoing professional development needs to occur to support those in the field so they can grow and we can continue to have quality early educators

Superintendent Dusty Blakey was also called upon and noted that districts are not in competition with early learning providers. Overall we must get an early start with educating our children. We are working with higher education and at all levels to work together to do what is best for children.

Dr. Krzanowski noted that the Office of Early Learning has put together a Roadmap to Recruitment flyer that can serve as a resource to early learning providers to connect with Teacher Academy, higher education institutions, apprenticeship program, and Office of Child Care Licensing (supervised experience). It shows the resources available for recruitment and retention. The roadmap flyer can be found [here](#).

Next, Dr. Krzanowski provided updates from the Office of Early Learning, which included a staffing update. She noted that we are about to offer an individual our last vacant position. We should have a new employee to introduce at our next meeting. She also noted that the [Community Conversations Final Report](#) was released, and noted that there was increased enrollment this year. She noted these are important meetings that drive our work.

She noted that tomorrow, August 1, Delaware First will be going completely paperless. The online application, which has been piloted for the last eight months, will be the only way to apply for a Delaware First qualification. Kim outlined the steps to request an IMS Account and then apply online. She encouraged everyone to start applying online and noted this must be done by the educators themselves, not the providers. Finally, applicants will be able to print off their qualification, instead of waiting for them to be sent.

Also [DOE's Early Literacy Plan](#) was launched by Governor Carney recently. It has four strategic intents which are:

- Aligned Core Instruction
- Implement Curriculum using High Quality Materials
- Enhance Early Literacy Instruction
- Support Educators through Institutes of Higher Education

This plan is looking at pre-k to third grade, not specifically early education.

Dr. Krzanowski noted that John Fisher-Klein will be presenting information sessions for the De Stars Revision and the [dates and times of upcoming information sessions](#) can be found on the DOE website. A flyer will be sent out

noting dates and times. These sessions will provide an update on the revisions process thus far. John Fisher-Kline noted input from everyone is needed.

She also added that there will be a presentation on the DEEDS system update discussed at one of our upcoming meetings.

Next, Dr. Krzanowski and Dr. Fitzgerald spoke about Quality Spending Proposal funding. The Office of Early Learning and Division of Social Services met regarding the RFP to fund two proposals to utilize the Quality Spending funding. One initiative is to fund 30 infant/toddler slots – 10 in each county.

The second quality spending proposal is the use of inclusion specialist to provide coaching/training to child care providers to help with them with children with special needs. This is another program that will be done by an RFP to hire 8 inclusion specialists to work throughout the state. A lot of work will be done this fall on these initiatives, with both programs starting January 2020.

A [Preschool Development Grant Update](#) given by Caitlin Gleason and EY Parthenon staff members introduced the EY Parthenon members to the DECC attendees and indicated they would be working with the DECC to establish a new strategic plan. A project timeline was explained, which includes interviews/feedback to gain insight on user experiences, data systems that will help inform risks, vision, goals and activities, and ultimately how the team will work with DECC members to develop a strategic plan.

At 11:54 AM, Dr. Kim Brancato, Cindy Brown and Jamie Walko announced that the Early Learning Inclusion Subcommittee is now officially one of the DECC's subcommittees. Dr. Brancato will chair the committee with staff support from OEL's Cindy Brown and contractor Jamie Walko. Everyone was offered the opportunity to join the subcommittee by signing up on the sheet provided.

Cindy explained the expansion of the ASQ in support of strong partnerships between school districts and early learning programs. She noted that beginning in the fall of 2019 each and every child will have the opportunity to receive a free developmental screening through either their school district or the Delaware Readiness team online web link. Providing access to screening will lead to earlier identification, meeting the needs of our children and families, which will lead to better child outcomes. Additional information can be found [here](#). She noted that future meetings of the ECIC would be scheduled.

At 12:04 p.m. the Chair adjourned the meeting.